# *Art & Eros Magazine*

Volume Sixteen: Spring 2025

**Art & Eros Magazine: Volume Sixteen**

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Cover picture: *Self-Portrait*, by Roy Arden, 1981

If you have a submission for the **Art & Eros Magazine** feel free to contact the magazine.

The editor can be contacted at

pbruskiewich @ gmail.com

*I'm gittin' pretty tired of this society stuff …*

Roy Arden

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# Prologue

Obelisk Press of Vancouver is delighted to publish the Spring 2025 edition of ***Art & Eros*** Magazine which serves to feature the work of aspiring artists.

***Art & Eros*** Magazine welcomes submissions on a bi-annual basis (Spring / Fall).

Please feel free to submit your short stories, prose, poetry and artwork to

pbruskiewich @ gmail.com

There is no fee to submit.

There is no writer's fee provided by the journal for those who submit.

The publishing rights remain with the writer.

# New Art

## *The Artistic Landscapes of Vancouver Artist Roy Arden*

[**Vancouver**] Roy Arden is a Vancouver born contemporary artist who enjoys mixed media and sculptural artwork very much in the DaDaist style of Duchamp's *Found Art*. He has also done Rayographs in the style of ManRay.

Roy was born in Vancouver in 1957 and graduated from Emily Carr school of design (now ECUAD - Emily Carr University of Art and Design) with a B.A. in photography and interdisciplinary studies in 1982. He also has a M.A. from UBC (1990).

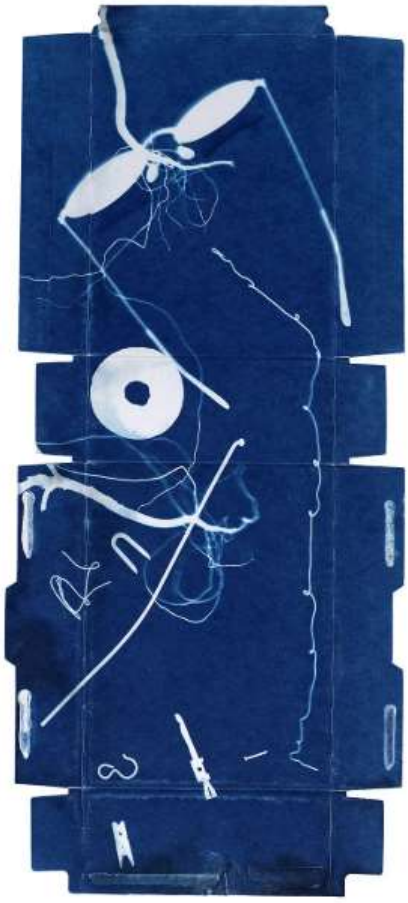
Roy's work can be found in many public collections in North America and Europe, including The National Gallery of Canada, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Centre Pompidou, Paris, The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart.

Over the past three decades he has exhibited in dozens of international exhibitions from New York to Sharjah, and Berlin to Sydney.

In 2007 the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibited a retrospective of two decades of his work, accompanied by a publication covering his art praxis from 1981–2007.

Around the turn of the Millennium, Roy changed from colour to black-and-white photography, focusing on the urban wasteland in Vancouver. In 2000, he began to produce videos.

Roy has been a photography and art instructor at both ECUAD and UBC and has been a guest teacher at art academies in Finland, Germany, and Switzerland.  In 2007 Roy published a book with Douglas & McIntyre presenting some of his art titled ‘Against the Day.’



*At Least the Sky is Blue*, 2018, Cyanotype on found packaging, 17 x 9 in

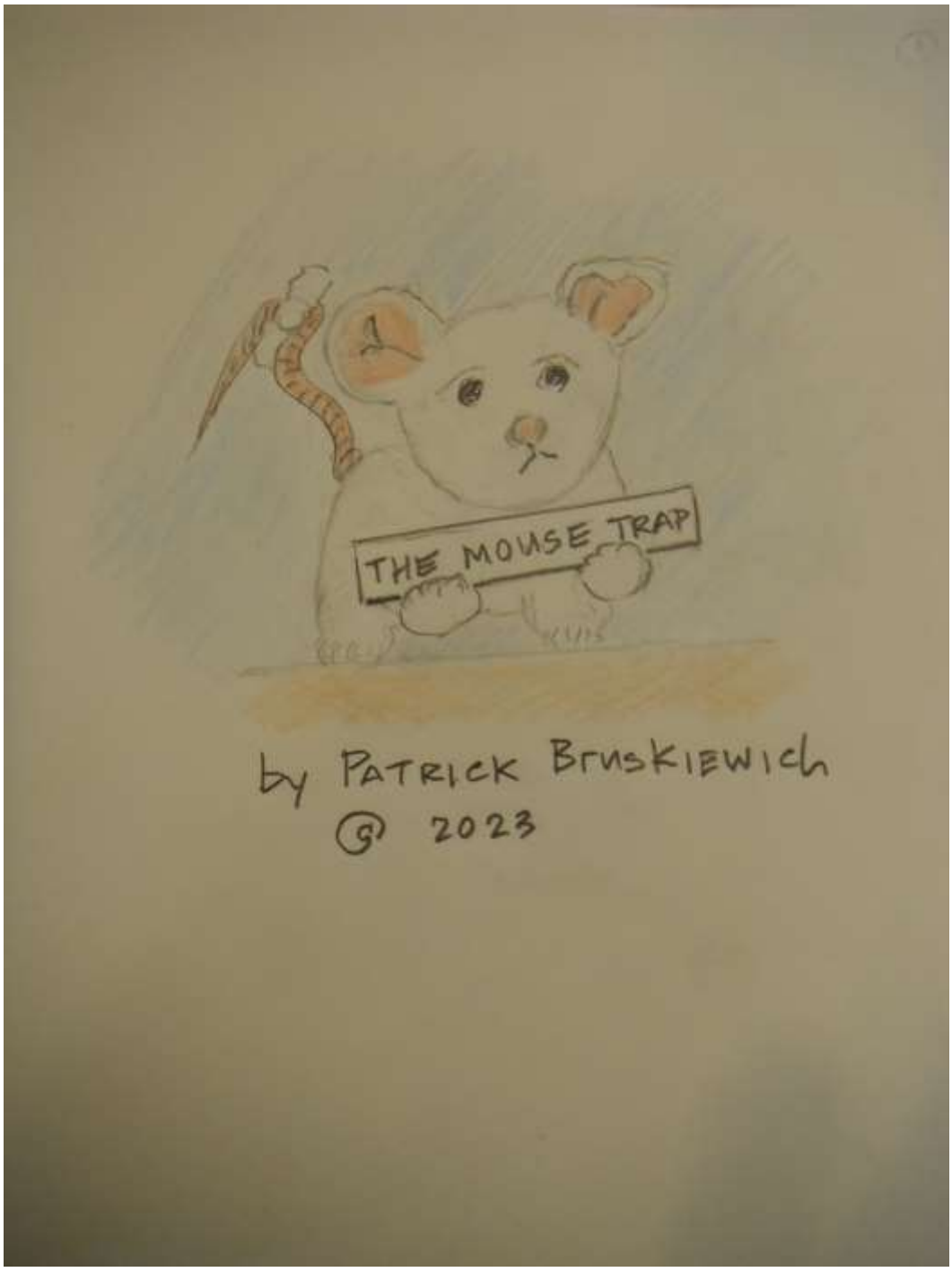
*D'Elegance 1*, 2000, gelatin silver print, 39 x 50 in.

Self Portrait 1, Vancouver, 1981, 8 x 8 in.

Society Stuff**,** 2010, Oil on linen, 63.0 x 32.0 in

***Pictorial: A Minotaur's Self Portrait***

***The Mouse Trap: A Comic by Patrick Bruskiewich***



TIME FOR BED
WE ARE JUST ACROSS THE HALL.
DON'T WORRY... I HAVE SET OUT THE MOUSE TRAPS.
SLEEP WELL!
MICE!
I am going under the covers!

SQUEAK
!
SQUEAK
PFFT!
I shouldn't have had sauer kraut for dinner!
SNAP!
LET ME SET YOU FREE!
POOR LITTLE MOUSE

CHEESE PLEASE!
OH THANK YOU!
HOME SWEET HOME
CHEESE
THE MOUSE TRAPS HAVE ALL SPRUNG ... DID YOU DO THIS?
WHO? ME!
BURP!
THE HAPPY ENDING

# New Prose

## *Why Helping Others Means I Can't Afford Meat by Michelle C*

*The Irony of Non-Profit Work …*

[**Vancouver**] On a Sunday night at my local Asian supermarket, I found myself staring at a pack of $6 "pork reminder"—offcuts from the butcher. Too expensive, I opted for my usual $2 tofu instead. As a non-profit worker helping those with food insecurity, the irony isn't lost on me. I mean, how can I preach about food security when I can't even afford pork scraps?

I joined right out of university, and I love my non-profit job. I love my coworkers, I love my clients, and I even love my boss. But my pay at this job is laughably low, and owning a place in Vancouver seems like a distant dream. Unlike the fantasy of landing a "finance, 6'5", blue-eyed guy" to support me, reality gifted me a blue-collar partner. So mooching off him isn't an option. If I ever want to own a place, I need to slash my spending and work even more hours at my second job—just like my coworkers who juggle family expenses or are saving for big purchases.

The next day, I read that in some non-profit any clients earning under $50,000 annually are considered low income. I joked, "Does that mean I qualify?" My boss chuckled at my quip. However, his sigh hinted at the grim reality: our program's funding is capped, hindering staffing improvements. Unfortunately, in non-profit work, you don't make much profit. I love my job but I've pondered sharpening my resume.

That evening, I attended a non-profit movie screening and networking event—Uncharitable—with a co-worker. To our delight, the event served lamb kebabs and chicken skewers, a welcome change from the usual cucumber sandwiches. We loaded our plates with skewers and kebabs, the first red meat I had eaten in five days. We sat down at a table, and someone joined us. She introduced herself and told us that she's semi-retired now. She was in non-profit for 25 years and now she's in non-profit consulting and making more money than before.

While making conversation, we asked her what she sees as the issue facing non-profits nowadays. She said, "The answer has always been the same: funding, staffing, and volunteers. We never have enough funding, and if we do, we can't use it as effectively as possible because of funder requirements. We can't afford to pay people what they are worth, and no one wants to work for basically nothing. And we don't have enough volunteers now because a single income household used to be enough, so the other partner, when they're less busy with the kids, can volunteer for us. But now, they are dying off." Agreeing, I added, "Exactly! Why would people volunteer for us when they can do gig work and make more money to make ends meet?"

Before the conversation could continue, we were ushered into the next room for the *Uncharitable* screening.

In the movie, I learned that it was not just me who struggled working in non-profits. According to "*The Non-profit Starvation Cycle*" by Ann Goggins Gregory and Don Howard from The Bridgespan Group, "1,500 in-depth

surveys of [non-profit] organizations with revenues of more than $100,000 revealed many dismaying findings: non-functioning computers, staff members who lacked the training needed for their positions...[still] 56 percent of [non-profit] respondents planned to reduce overhead spending. Yet decreasing already austere overhead spending (also called indirect expenses) may jeopardize organizations' very existence—not to mention their ability to fulfill their missions."

From top to bottom of the non-profit sector, we struggle with the "overhead myth" demonizing necessary expenses; chairs, electricity, salaries, advertising; constraining organizations' efficacy. The irony stings: we're expected to fulfill missions without adequate resources. Trust in non-profits' fiscal responsibility and investment in staff training are imperative.

As a society, we are so stuck in the mindset that money we donate needs to only be spent on the needy people the non-profit is serving. In principle, I don't disagree—who wants to see the money they "give to the poor" get spent on "not the poor"? But if you don't give money for the normal expenses of an organization, then how do you expect an organization to function or flourish?

When I donate money, I trust that the organization has a good purpose and I believe in their goal. When I volunteer my time, I know they aren't taking advantage of me because I can see the faces the volunteering impacts. When I work at my non-profit job, I know my job is worth it because their stomachs aren't empty. So why can't my funder and our society do the same?

Can my funder and our society allow long-term investments in training the non-profit worker and volunteer so they can provide better services? What about trusting that the professionals in the non-profit industry can use your donated money wisely to provide the best service we can to those in need?

What about letting us advertise how we want so we can get more people to donate and more volunteers to grow the non-profit and serve more people? What about paying the non-profit workers enough so they don't need to choose between doing good and doing well?

Non-profit workers deserve to be paid enough to avoid the same fate as those they help. Fair pay is essential. Let's value those who dedicate their lives to doing good!

***Pictorial: Guess Who?***

***Who gets to decide … ? by Marisa L***

*Who gets to decide if you're allowed to call yourself an artist?*

[**Paris**] I have wrestled, mightily, with my identity as an artist. Even calling myself a creative feels a bit like hiding, like finding a safer way of claiming my power. I have multiple false starts of *The Artist's Way* under my belt. *The Creative Act* continues to rot on my bedside table 3 chapters in. My freshman

year major was Biomedical Engineering, eclipsing my dream to study fashion with two little words uttered by my Asian father: “starting salary.”

Someone I adore boiled down the artist’s impulse concisely to “experiencing something that you want to share” and reminded me that not every feeling that moves through us needs to be “big A art.” All those little moments communicated and translated through our point of view are art.

The act of creating art can be seen even in the mundane moments that pepper the galleries of our life, like the way we compose a series of haphazardly snapped cell phone photos over text.

Last night in Paris, I found myself with a free window of time solo and filled it with one of my favorite rituals: going to a nice dinner alone with my journal. A single spot at the bar feels like box seats to the show that is my life. The performance changes with set and setting and yet, I feel equally blessed to see it each time. After animatedly sharing details about my favorite oyster of the bunch, the waiter asked if I was a writer. Flustered, I replied “I’m just journaling”, paused for a moment, and then surprised myself to say, “yes, I am a writer.” I show up to the page with a curiosity, a compulsion within me to string words together to be understood. My instinct all growing up when facing big feelings, heavy feelings, ones that felt far older than me, was to write poetry in order to process. That poetry was published in middle and high school. I’ve held a page of my own words in my shaking hand, reading into a microphone in front of people. My extra curricular activity in high school was working on a literary magazine. I have maintained a journal my entire life. So

why was I recoiling with such force from the title of "writer"? Who decides if I'm a writer, other than me?

How foolish is it to apply the forces of capitalism to the sacred nature of art. Measuring and validating the title of the artist based on output. Of production. Are we only successful as artists if our work reaches an audience en masse? If it supports our living? Are the fruits of creative labor birthed only for consumption? While I think a yearning to communicate and be understood is layered beneath or woven within the urge to create art, we ultimately have no control over how something is viewed or received. To me, while I recognize art is commodified in order to make of it an industry, when I walked the Musee D'Orsay, I pondered who decides what paintings line these walls. The engine of groupthink that deems what's valuable, what's "good", and what endures. Decisions required in order to conjure the devotion to protecting the ideas shared by these artists of lifetimes past.

The Inventing Impressionism exhibit was illuminating to me. Early Impressionism, like most visual movements, was a radical and unwelcome disruption to common tastes at the time. 150 years ago, on April 15, 1874, the first impressionist exhibition opened in Paris, banding together 31 artists who, fed up by the gatekeeping structure of the art world, had a common a desire to take matters into their own hands. Rallying around their shared rejection and lured by the promise of showing their work on their own terms, they spanned mediums and visual styles. Showcasing modern life, nudity of s*x workers, industrial scenes, and war scenes were extreme acts of rebellion at the time. This brushed directly against the tastemakers and juries that enforced

the “rules” of painting through awards and approvals for displaying works in upper-echelon spaces. When I go to a museum, I’m so reminded that we continue to wrestle with the same themes in society. Industrialization. Connection. Love. Death. Power. The natural world. Museums preserve the perspective of these artists as they tried to answer questions that still ring true today.

Though society has changed drastically, one aspect that artists must rail against remains true: the structures of judgment in enforcing same-ness and elitism.

Wandering into the next room, weaving between throngs of tourists, I stumbled upon the Van Gogh wing. Who better embodies the tragic nature of art appreciation than him. At war with himself and the world around him: battling his mental health, constantly poor. Yet now, in a world transformed after he left it, his artwork outlives him as intellectual property making significant income through cheesy things like The Van Gogh Immersive Experience (which I did see with my mom and chuckled the whole time about how he would be rolling in his grave knowing that his paintings were turned into digital collage barfed all over giant walls through projection art).

Roses et anémones, 1890, Vincent Van Gogh

It wasn’t his portrait that was swarmed with crowds snapping grainy cell phone pictures that moved me. It was the painting of roses owned by Gachet that struck something within me. In it, I saw self-abandonment. I saw shrinking. I saw his signature style we now know and love in Starry Night and the like — swirling with the curse and blessing of how he saw the world. There he was, a prolific artist far ahead of his time, trying to find commercial success through a trite table floral scene, suppressing the dramatic flourish. It stirred within me the feeling of being misunderstood. Of contorting our

creativity to pander to selling. Selling out. Selling ourselves. Projection? Maybe. But isn't that the only job of the viewer?

Even more, I consider how desperately we need art to get through this incredibly trying time. Genocide. Political instability. A global rise in far-right movements. Attempted assassinations. All that endures, the way we find meaning through it all, in my opinion, is through art.

I shed a lot of titles this year when I left my shiny job in fashion at the end of January. I shed even more at the end of June when I cleared my schedule to gallivant across Europe for two months. I'm no longer a Director of Marketing or a freelancer. My full-time job is to play. What a luxury. What a gift. So I'm claiming it. I'm an artist. I'm a writer.

***There is no jury. There is no judge. No one decides but me.***

## *Who Put the Bullets in Baldwin's Gun? by William Webster*

[**New York**] I have watched the Rust manslaughter trial of Alec Baldwin closely. Alec Baldwin is one of my top five favorite actors. I first came across him in *Hunt for Red October*, opposite Sean Connery who was also one of my top five actors.

A shooting on the set of Rust, a Western style film, killed the director and wounded one other person. Alec Baldwin pointed the gun and pulled the trigger without first checking whether the gun had dummy ammunition.

I frankly don't know how to tell dummy from real ammo. I would hope the gun-meister on set would be able to do this.

The gun-meister has been convicted of negligence, but there is something still left hanging. The extra information that the judge dealt with, and which was behind her dismissal of the case, relates to the fact that live ammunition was found in more than one gun or gun belt on set. This speaks to someone deliberately spiking the ammo.

Now that the judge has thrown Alec Baldwin's manslaughter case out it is perhaps time to ponder who brought the real, live bullets on set?

Now who would do something like that?

I would speculate that it had someone who had a deep seated grudge. I have to wonder whether the spiking was meant to either implicate Alec Baldwin in a shooting (which it did), or to perhaps see to it that it was Alec Baldwin was shot on set.

Now who would be behind spiking the ammo? Someone who didn't like some of Alec Baldwin's previous roles … perhaps. Could the trail lead back to Saturday Night Live?

If there is a good sleuth out there?

## *French Onion Soup by Rose Lang*

[**Paris**] I went out for a light lunch recently with some friends at a restaurant I had not frequented since before Covid. We were handed the menu and it shocked me how the prices had gone up.

My favorite dish, French Onion Soup, was listed for 21 Euros! They were even charging for the bread set out at our table as an appetiser. The last time I had French Onion Soup at this restaurant it went for 7 Euros!

I had only forty Euros in my purse (pay day was at the end of the week and it was only Wednesday). I could have charged my lunch but I didn't feel like paying three times as much for something made with one-half onion, some consommé and a dollop of butter and a dash of red wine.

The waiter who recognized me wonder why I didn't order anything but just munched on bread and sipped some wine. Nonetheless he brought me a bowl of my favorite French Onion Soup and then decided to charge me the old price … 7 Euros. I think he knew that I would never return to the restaurant if he charged me 21 Euros!

After all how much does one-half onion, some consommé and a dollop of butter and a dash of red wine really cost? Have the costs of running a restaurant really gone up so much, or were they just making up for lost profits?

## *Free Movies by Isabella Montsouris*

[**Montreal**] Times are tough all around and each of us have to make decisions about where we spend our hard earned income. I was taught by my mother and grandparents to think to the future and to be frugal. Each month I spent less than I earn and set some savings aside. I aim to save 15% of what I earn (after tax) but most months it is closer to 10 %. While I have a credit card, I never use it.

Some of my friends are less frugal than I am and have now have debt. Debt seems to have crept up on them. They would use their credit cards a few times a day for small purchases and then wonder why they added up to such a monumental bill at the end of each month. For instance a Starbucks purchase each day adds up to over $ 125 at the end of each month. I have weaned some of them off their Starbucks indulgences by showing them that for the cost of one Starbucks drink they can buy a jar of instant coffee and save $ 120 a month or $ 1,400 a year. The sugar and cream costs a bit extra … but you still end up far ahead with the instant coffee.

In another spending change, this past month I have introduced my friends to the *free film world*. First there are the films. My friends go to the theater at least a half dozen times each year. I haven't gone to the theaters for at least five years. Covid brought an end to that. With the tickets, popcorn and everything else that's another $ 120. Perhaps I am old fashion but I borrow DVD – you have heard of them haven't you Digital Video Disks – from my

library. I have a DVD player in my ten year old computer and managed to acquire a large screen TV to watch the films.

Second there is streaming. Unlike many of my friends who spend money on *Netfix* I have chosen a different route. *Netflix* will put you back a few hundred dollars a year (spending is adding up isn't it!) Instead of *Netflix* a techie friend suggested I check out **archive.org**, a digital archive in San Francisco. I found there are thousands of good films on this site from around the world, which you can both watch online but also download. Occasionally someone even slips a pirated version of a contemporary film onto the site before the digital police takes it down.

*Tubi TV* was also recommended to me by my techie friend who, by the way, is totally anti-Hollywood. I found about 20 % of the *Tubi* films worth watching.

Many of the films at *Tubi TV* are horror films or violent in one way or another, a genre I am really not interested in. I found a few nice art and romance films. By the way you can search by genre.

The downside of *Tubi TV*, compared to archive.org, is that you cannot download the films – you can only stream them.

My techie friend has given me a list of other sites he says I may want to try including Pluto TV ...

Oh by the way I don't watch television and don't have internet in my apartment. Yet each week I watch a dozen films. By doing this I save over $ 1,200 a year.

All together I save over $ 3,500 a year by these frugal life style choices – that is equivalent to two months of my rent.

By the way I really enjoy the films not just because they are good … but because they are free!

*A fine collection of Art Books*

# Atelier Press

*A growing collection of titles*

*Editor in Chief: Patrick Bruskiewich*

***Pictorial: You Better Run and Hide … I have you in my Sights!***

### *Oh My: Part One … by Charlotte*

I have to admit I was angry at my mother. On the eve of my seventeenth birthday she told me to pack a travel bag and off we went across country, from New York City to Stanford in California. It was the start of the summer and I thought we were just taking a short holiday together. When we were cruising at 30,000 feet on our way from New York to Chicago she broke the news that she was separating from my father. She had caught him having an affair with one of his grad students …

When my mother broke the news I could not stop crying. Things had been tense at home over the past several months. I knew something was going on but neither my father nor mother would tell me what. It seems his grad student girlfriend had gotten pregnant … (my mother used another word … but oars are for boats aren't they?). That sounded familiar. That's how my parents met and also how I came along.

My mother was my father's second wife. He was a married man when she was his graduate student and had gotten pregnant. He had wanted my mother to have an abortion but she refused … *Thank God* … otherwise I would not be here to tell my story. Now it looked like he would have a third wife, and another baby. I had an older half-sister from his first marriage. Now we would both have a new sibling.

As I looked out the window I wondered about what would come next? When we got to Chicago I wanted to turn back home but my mother said that we

would be moving to a new university in California. Both my parents are university professors. I now understood why my mother asked me for my cellphone when we got on the plane. I pleaded for it but all she said was "I promise I will give it back to you when we get to Stanford." When we got on the plane she didn't even tell me we were off to California. I thought we were getting off in Chicago.

If I had my cellphone I would have called my boyfriend then and there and he would have flown to Chicago to get me and bring me back to his place in New York. At least I would have been in a familiar city.

I was twice as angry with my mother because my boyfriend and I had made plans for us to go upstate to his family's cottage and spend the summer together there. And quite frankly I wanted to share a bed with him, something my mother forbade me to do. "What if you got pregnant?" Sure, fancy that she would say that, I was sixteen and she was thirty-five. I heard that the first time she had sex was with her prof (my father) as a way of trying to convince him to give her a higher final grade!

It is kind'a crazy because she knew that I knew the whole story … but I was not allowed to say anything! My mother had been over protective of me. My parents sent me to an all-girl Catholic school. I knew for a fact that I was the only girl in my grade who was still a virgin. I had not even touched a boy or let a boy touch me. I had never even seen a naked boy nor let see me naked. The fact that my boyfriend was back in New York and I was going to live in

California made matters twice as bad. He was Catholic and good boy. That was just too much pressure on me.

By the time we had left Chicago I had made my decision … this summer I was going to be feral. I would lose my virginity as a way of getting back at my mother. In retrospect this was a stupid decision which thankfully played … but not fully. By the end of the summer I would know a bit more about boys … yet still wore my halo.

At Stanford my mother was going to be interviewed for three jobs, one of which she would be asked to take. The three interviews were more to let her decide which position she wanted. The university had already made her a job offer. For the week they had arranged to put us up at the guesthouse at the Stanford Linear Accelerator.

When we arrived at the SLAC guesthouse, as we were checking in my mother said she would be going out to dinner tonight with your prof friends and asked if I wanted to come. I said an emphatic no. I then asked my mother for my cellphone. When she gave it back to me the battery had been entirely drained and we didn't have a charger. Neither did the guest house!

"What am I going to all night?" I asked her.

"You can watch television," she answered.

The manager frowned. "There is no television in our rooms Ma'am."

Now I was hooped!

Out of the corner of my eye I saw a man sitting reading a newspaper and he looked at me and seemed to understand my plight. Not just my little one, mind you, but the bigger plight. He reached into his jacket pocket and dangled a cellphone charger. He put his finger to his lips and mocked … shh! Then he folded the newspaper, placed the charger within the fold, got up and walked over to stand next to me.

"Here miss, you can borrow my weekend New York Times. When you are finished with it just place it outside room 12." Then he walked away. My angst seemed to dissolve in half. I was still miffed I was in California, but now at least I will be able to text my boyfriend. I also sensed I had a new friend. We were given room 14.

My mother turned to me and said "there dear, now you have something to do this evening. Are you hungry?"

We had travelled the day. I don't eat much when we traveled, my mother knew this and so she knew I would be hungry. The guesthouse manager said there are some menus for local restaurants who would deliver but "your daughter would have to go down to the gate to get her food when it arrived."

My mother charged a pizza on our room account. Lucky for me there was a vending machine with cold drinks. My pizza arrived just as my mother was

ready to go out for the evening and so we both walked to the gate, she to hop into her cab and me to grab my pizza. I had asked for a medium but my mother had ordered a large, and well that was just too much for me to eat all by myself. As I walked back past room 12 I had an instance of hesitation before I knocked on his door.

When he opened the door he smiled and flippantly said "I didn't order a pizza!"

"Will you share it with me?" I asked him in a voice that was almost pleading.

"Sure come in … " He looked up and down the aisle before asking " will your mother be joining us?"

"No she has gone out for dinner with some of her friends." He ushered me into his room and I set the pizza down at the center of a small round table. He pulled out a chair for me and asked "would you like me to get you something to drink?" I smiled and produced two cans of Mountain Dew, one from each of the pockets of my jacket.

"My favorite," he said. "What's the special occasion?"

"My seventeenth birthday …"

“Congratulations.” He suddenly kissed me on both cheeks the way the French do. This made me blush. There was something about him that spoke of kindness and gentleness.

Our conversation started with the stand-by “where are you from?” By the time we were half finished the pizza we were like old friends that had known each other forever. This was the moment I decided to open up to him about my angst.

By the time he said “you should wait until you are married to have intercourse,” my heart sank. Maybe it was silly of me to expect to jump into bed with him?

After a pause he continued “… but it is possible for woman to enjoy herself without having intercourse …”

I looked up at him and mockingly appeared perplexed. I wanted to see where this conversation would go.

“Do you know what intercourse means?”

Although I did know I still shook my head.

“Intercourse is when a woman lets a man put his penis inside of her vagina …”

I blushed warmly when he said penis and twice as much when he said vagina.

“You are a virgin aren’t you?” he asked quietly.

I lowered my eyes and nodded slowly.

“Being a virgin is not something to be embarrassed about. This is something you should be proud about! You want to protect your reproductive health. Did you know that every second adult in the United States has or have had a sexually transmitted disease?”

When he said that I looked up at him surprised.

He continued. “I bet half the girls in your class back in New York have or have had the clap. “

“The clap … What’s that?”

“The clap … is slang for gonorrhea. It can be transmitted through oral, genital, or anal sex with someone who has the infection. It can also be spread from mother to child during birth. This bacterial infection is on the rise in the US and is becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics. It is pretty nasty and can harm your uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries. It is good you are still a virgin …”

You would think this revelation would cool my angst off but strangely this made me even more hot and bothered.

We had all but finished our pizza but not our conversation.

“Did you read the article in the times about the HIV hot spot out in the Bronx?”

I shook my head.

He said “you should read it. A high school in the Bronx has at least twelve students in grades eleven and twelve who have all contracted HIV from one fella’ who bedded some girls without wearing a condom. They went to bed with other boys and well four months in there are at least nine girls and three boys who have HIV and I suspect a good half dozen more will come down with HIV before this tragedy plays out.”

I shook my head solemnly. “So what are some of the other ways that a woman to enjoy herself without having intercourse?”

“Stand up.”

I complied. He started by pulling my blouse over my head.

“Now you take a piece of clothing off me.”

I took off his shirt.

He undid my pants and I let then drop to the floor.

I undid his belt and his pants dropped too, hesitated by a second by his erection.

Then he stepped close to me and wrapped his arms around me to undo my bra. When my bra popped off my breasts my nipples were erect and sensitive.

I hesitated for a second as he took off his socks and I followed by taking off mine as well.

For a few seconds we stood in front of each other with our modesty hidden away behind thin pieces of fabric. It was a moment that he gave me to ask myself … do I want to continue in this game?

After a good thirty seconds he continued.

"You first" he said and I bet forward and slowly drew down his boxers. His penis sprung out from under the band and wobbled back and forth. It was an amazing sight I had never before seen. I just stared and started to giggle with a mixture of nervousness and happiness.

Then he stepped forward and slowly drew down my panties over my hips and down my bare legs. I stepped out of my panties. The sensation I felt was

marvelous.  I felt a cool tingling all across all my body. I was wet between my legs and I could feel the blush across my face and chest.

“What next?  I whispered.

“Let us take a shower together …” he whispered back.

As we were about to step in the shower, I asked him to take a picture of me with my cellphone.  It was wonderful being admired in this way.

He was kind and gentle with me, and no we did not have sex.  What happened in the shower I may share with you another time, but it was wonderful!

### *The Game of the Sexes … by SW*

Some view the game of the sexes as a *sporting event*, but not me. Even when I was a *wee* little boy I knew that the game of life was not a gladiator sport.

At age fifteen I sorted out how girls and boys are different. There are twelve fundamental differences between a boy and a girl.

*Not all of these difference relate to sex.*

The *Gold* banner of the difference is in the kindness you see in girls. Boys tend not to be kind by nature, but girls are. This is about hormones.

The form and function of each sex also reflect their purpose in life. Girls are meant to perpetuate the species while boys are meant to toil and provide for offspring. Boys are taller, have longer limbs and greater mechanical advantage. We are meant to lift and carry, cut and drag, and of course combat. It's in our testosterone. Girls are meant to nurture – this is in their estrogen.

The brains of girls and boys evolved differently, with both hemispheres more robustly linked in girls compared to boys. For boys it is either thought in one hemisphere or the other. With girls both hemispheres light up in PET Tomographs.

Boys weigh more and have hair all over their bodies. Girls have hair only where needed. She is soft all over.

Why do boys have breasts? We know why girls do. I will leave you to figure this one out (the clue is human embryos are indistinct for the first seven weeks of gestation – something about pluripotentiality).

Boys hearts don't beat as efficiency as girl's hearts. Boys lungs and immune system are less robust (we saw that during Covid-19). The GI system in a girl is more efficient as well. Are you keeping count?

Boys and girls have the same number of bones, but the hips of a girl are quite different from a boy's given the needs of birthing children – more space between the legs. Evolution has provided for this.

Then there are the sexual differences which relate to a girl's *source de vie* (where babies come from) and the '*best of a boy'*, which hangs outside his body.

You have to admit that she is beautifully designed while a boy is a cartoon character. She has soft external folds and a clitoris. He is just a wiener.

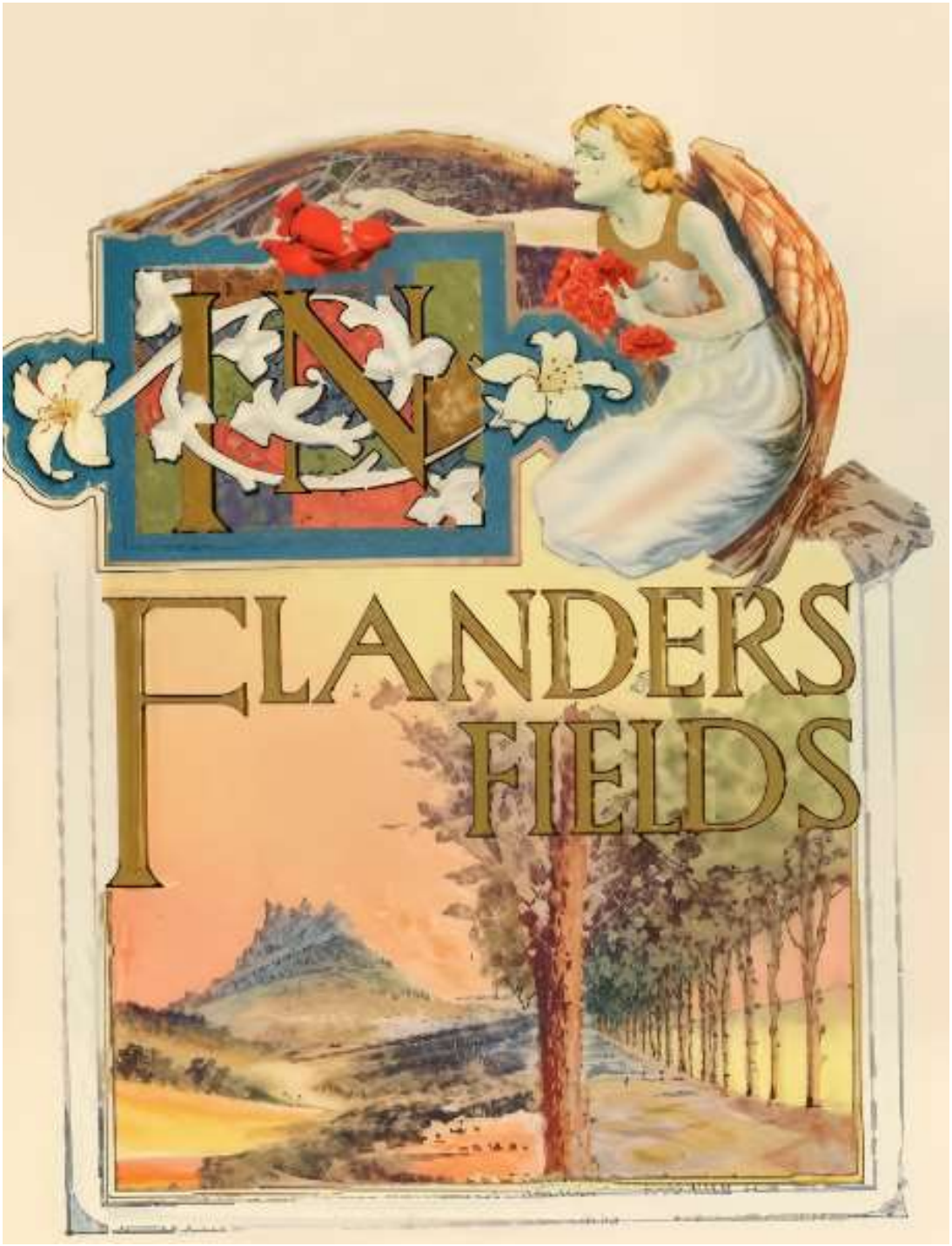
She has her uterus and other fine things. Have you ever noticed that a boy's scrotum is where a girl's birth canal is? And while girls have ovaries, boys have testicles ensconced within a pocket of muscle and skin that looks suspiciously like a uterus turned inside out.

The first time I saw what a girl looked like I started to *shake* with the nervousness of realizing that God existed – for only God could create such beauty.

In the game of the sexes, *globally,* girls have all the advantages when it comes to human form and function, don't you think? That's why they live longer.

# Art Works from the Modern Era

***In Flander's Fields from a book published in 1922***



N FLANDERS FIELDS
THE POPPIES GROW
Between the crosses row on row
That mark our place & in the sky
The larks still bravely singing fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below

E ARE THE
DEAD
SHORT DAYS
AGO
We lived felt dawn
Saw sunset glow
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie–
IN FLANDERS FIELDS

TAKE VP OVR
QVARREL
WITH THE FOE
To you from failing
hands we throw
The Torch, Be yours
to lift it high
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep tho poppies blow
IN FLANDERS FIELDS

## *Pictorial:  A Study in Red*

### *How to Cheer a Friend Up.  Make her a Work of Art by SW*

[**Vancouver**]  When you have a friend who suffers from chronic depression how can you cheer them up?  One way is to do something creative with them. Notice the painting on the easel. She came that evening and painted.

Another way is to make your friend into a work of art.

Being creative is one of the best ways to treat depression … Art Therapy!

# New Poems by Contemporary Poets

## *Wonder Why It Is by Aki Kurosawa*

It is the middle of the night
and I cannot sleep
It is too hot to sleep.
The moisture in the air sticks
my panties to my bare skin –
so I take them off
and fan myself all over.
The cold air arouses me
And so with fan in one hand
I tickle myself with the other,
Seeking pleasure in every fold of my skin
Now I am even hotter than before but …
Really I don't mind it …
I will take a cold bath later
After I have spent myself …
And soap myself all over …
And wonder why it is
I am always alone when I am
so –
ar
ous
ed!

***Pictorial:  A Beautiful Composition***

## *Perhaps I am twice or more … by Patrick Bruskiewich*

I am not half the man I used to be
Nor one in his entirety
Perhaps I am twice or more …

With the passage of time
I have learned so much
That I did not know before

When I was much younger
No longer do I need to run
Nor prove my worth …

To get to where I am going.

# Prose from the Past

## *Letter to Anton Ridder Van Rappard from Vincent van Gogh*

I have been working very hard. I had not made many compositions or studies for a long time, so when I once got started, I became so eager that many a morning I got up at four o'clock It must not surprise you that some of my figures are so entirely different from those I make at times when I use models.

I seldom work from memory I do not practice that kind of thing very much. Besides, I am so used to work with the natural form now and can keep my personal feeling out of it much better than I could at first. I waver less and just because I am sitting opposite the model, *sometimes |I feel more like myself*.

When I have a model who is quiet and steady and with whom I am acquainted, then I draw repeatedly till there is one drawing that is different from the rest, which does not look like an ordinary study, but more typical and with more feeling. All the same it was made under circumstances similar to those of the others, yet the latter are just studies with less feeling and life in them. This manner of working is like another one, just as plausible. As to *The Little Winter Gardens,* for example, you said yourself they had so much feeling; all right, but that was not accidental I drew them several times and there was no feeling in them.

Then afterwards after I had done the ones that were so stiff came the others. It is the same with the clumsy and awkward things. How it happens that I can express something of that kind? Because the thing has already taken form in

my mind before I start on it. The first attempts are absolutely unbearable. I say this because I want you to know that if you see something worth-while in what I am doing, it is not by accident but because of real intention and purpose.

I am very much pleased to have you notice that of late I have been trying to express the values of crowds, and that I try to separate things in the dizzy whirl and chaos one can see in each little corner of Nature.

Formerly the light and shade in my studies were mostly arbitrary, at least they were not put down logically, and so they were colder and flatter. When I once get the feeling of my subject, and get to know it, I usually draw it in three or more variations be it a figure or landscape only I always refer to Nature for every one of them and then I do my best not to put in any detail, as the dream quality would then be lost.

When Tersteeg or my brother then says to me: "What is that, grass or coal?" I answer: "Glad to hear that you cannot see what it is."

Still it is enough like Nature for the simple peasants of this part of the country. They say: "Yes, that's the hedge of Juffrouw Renese," and: "There are the beanpoles of van der Louw."

***Pictorial: Oh how much she loves him …***

## *The Process of Inspiration by Jean Cocteau*

Often the public forms an idea of inspiration that is quite false, almost a religious notion. Alas! I do not believe that inspiration falls from heaven. I think it rather the result of a profound indolence and of our incapacity to put to work certain forces in ourselves. These unknown forces work deep within us, with the aid of the elements of daily life, its scenes and passions, and, when they burden us and oblige us to conquer the kind of somnolence in which we indulge ourselves like invalids who try to prolong dream and dread resuming contact with reality, in short when the work that makes itself in us and in spite of us demands to be born, we can believe that this work comes to us from beyond and is offered us by the gods. The artist is more slumberous in order that he shall not work. By a thousand ruses, he prevents his nocturnal work from coming to the light of day.

For it is at this moment that consciousness must take precedence over the unconscious and that it becomes necessary to find the means which permit the unformed work to take form, to render it visible to all. To write, to conquer ink and paper, accumulate letters and paragraphs, divide them with periods and commas, is a different matter from carrying around the dream of a play or of a book.

"More light" was the last phrase of Goethe. This phrase assumes meaning when one considers the struggle of Goethe against the shadow and that existence which he consecrated to clarifying the least recesses of his being and to repulsing the charm of the dog and the wolf. I bow before certain scenes

of Faust, Part II, that of the fall of Euphorion, for example, in which Goethe reaches the state of grace, in full possession of himself. It would be inexact to accuse an artist of pride when he declares that his work requires somnambulism. The poet is at the disposal of his night. His role is humble, he must clean house and await its due visitation.

The play that I am producing at *le Theatre de l'Oeuvre*, The Knights of the Round Table, is a visitation of this sort. I was sick and tired of writing, when one morning, after having slept poorly, I woke with a start and witnessed, as from a seat in a theater, three acts which brought to life an epoch and characters about which I had no documentary information and which I regarded moreover as forbidding.

Long afterward, I succeeded in writing the play and I divined the circumstances that must have served to incite me.

{**Editor's Note**: *Cocteau was an opium addict and realized many of his literary ideas in an opiate's state of mind …* }

# Poetry From the Past

## *Three Poems by Duncan Campbell Scott*

### The Voice and the Dusk

The slender moon and one pale star,
A rose leaf and a silver bee
From some god's garden blown afar,
Go down the gold deep tranquilly.
Within the south there rolls and grows
A mighty town with tower and spire,
From a cloud bastion masked with rose
The lightning flashes diamond fire.
The purple martin darts about
The purlieus of the iris fen;
The king-bird rushes up and out,
He screams and whirls and screams again.
A thrush is hidden in a maze
Of cedar buds and tamarac bloom,
He throws his rapid flexile phrase,
A flash of emeralds in the gloom.
A voice is singing from the hill
A happy love of long ago;
Ah! tender voice, be still, be still,
'Tis sometimes better not to know.'
The rapture from the amber height
Floats tremblingly along the plain,

Where in the reeds with fairy light
The lingering' fireflies gleam again.
Buried in dingles more remote,
Or drifted from some ferny rise.
The swooning of the golden throat
Drops in the mellow dusk and dies.
A soft wind passes lightly drawn,
A wave leaps silverly and stirs
The rustling sedge, and then is gone
Down the black cavern in the firs.

**The Sea by the Wood**

I Dwell in the sea that is wild and deep,
But afar in a shadow still,
I can see the trees that gather and sleep
In the wood upon the hill.
The deeps are green as an emerald's face.
The caves are crystal calm,
But I wish the sea were a little trace
Of moisture in God's palm.
The waves are weary of hiding pearls.
Are aweary of smothering gold.
They would all be air that sweeps and swirls
In the branches manifold.
They are weary of laving the seaman's eyes

With their passion prayer unsaid,
They are weary of sobs and the sudden sighs
And movements of the dead.
All the sea is haunted with human lips
Ashen and sere and gray.
You can hear the sails of the sunken ships
Stir and shiver and sway
In the weary solitude;
If mine were the will of God, the main
Should melt away in the rustling wood
Like a mist that follows the rain.
But I dwell in the sea that is wild and deep
And afar in the shadow still,
I can see the trees that gather and sleep
In the wood upon the hill.

**The Wood by the Sea**

I dwell in the wood that is dark and kind
But afar off tolls the main,
Afar, far off I hear the wind.
And the roving of the rain.
The shade is dark as a palmer's hood.
The air with balm is bland:
But I wish the trees that breathe in the wood
Were ashes in God's hand.

The pines are weary of holding nests,
Are aweary of casting shade;
Wearily smoulder the resin crests
In the pungent gloom of the glade.
Weary are all the birds of sleep,
The nests are weary of wings.
The whole wood yearns to the swaying deep.
The mother of restful things.
The wood is very old and still.
So still when the dead cones fall.
Near in the vale or away on the hill,
You can hear them one and all.
And their falling wearies me;
If mine were the will of God,—oh, then
The wood should tramp to the sounding sea.
Like a marching army of men!
But I dwell in the wood that is dark and kind.
Afar off tolls the main;
Afar, far off I hear the wind
And the roving of the rain.

***Pictorial: Oh My someone's coming***

## *Four poems by Ethelwyn Wetherald*

### My Orders

My orders are to fight;
Then if I bleed, or fail,
Or strongly win, what matters it?
God only doth prevail.
The servant craveth naught
Except to serve with might.
I was not told to win or lose,

My orders are to fight.

### Legacies

Unto my friends I give my thoughts,
Unto my God my soul,
Unto my foe I leave my love —
These are of life, the whole.

Nay, there is something—a trifle—left;
Who shall receive this dower?
See, Earth Mother, a handful of dust—
Turn it into a flower.

**The Followers**

One day I caught up with my angel, she
Who calls me bell-like from a sky-touched tower.
'Twas in my roof-room, at the stillest hour
Of a still, sunless day, when suddenly
A flood of deep unreasoned ecstasy
Lifted my heart, that had begun to cower,
And wrapped it in a flame of living power.
My leader said, 'Arise and follow me.'

Then as I followed gladly I beheld
How all men baffled, burdened, crossed or curst,
Clutch at an angel's hem, if near or far;
One not-to-be-resisted voice, deep-belled.
Speaks to them, and of those we call the worst,
Lo, each poor blackened brow strains to a Star!

**The Wind of Death**

THE wind of death, that softly blows
The last warm petal from the rose.
The last dry leaf from off the tree,
To-nig'ht has come to breathe on me.
There was a time I learned to hate
As weaker mortals learn to love

;

The passion held me fixed as fate.
Burned in my veins early and late;
But now a wind falls from above
—
The wind of death, that silently
Enshroudeth friend and enemy.
There was a time my soul was thrilled
By keen ambition's v/hip and spur;
My master forced me where he willed.
And with his power my life was filled;
But now the old-time pulses stir
How faintly in the wind of death,
That bloweth lightly as a breath.
And once, but once, at Love's dear feet
I yielded strength and life and heart;
His look turned bitter into sweet,
His smile made all the world complete;
The wind blows loves like leaves apart —
The wind of death, that tenderly
Is blowing 'twixt my love and me.
0 wind of death, that darkly blows
Each separate ship of human woes
Far out on a mysterious sea,
1 turn, I turn my face to thee!

# Novella: The Amazonian by Patrick Bruskiewich

When I was growing up I used to get into trouble all the time at school. I did this on purpose and if you are patient you will see how this made sense. There was method to my madness …

I am a girl, the eldest of three and when I was twelve my father died in an industrial accident, leaving my mother, me and my two younger siblings, both boys, to fend for ourselves. The company my father worked for refused to take credit for not following industrial safety rules and it took three years before they paid out a small settlement, most of which went to the lawyers.

There had been a carbon dioxide leak in a valve at the brewery. My father was cleaning a vat when he first went unconscious and then asphyxiated. At his funeral, while he lay there in his coffin, he was still blue from hypoxia. I cried for months until my eyes could not shed anymore tears then I went completely quiet. My mother was worried for me. I was close to my father. I told her she best look after my younger brothers.

One afternoon, on the anniversary of my father's death, I had walked to our community garden and was lying flat on my back looking up in the sky wondering where heaven was. I contemplated whether my life was over and whether I wanted to once again be with my father. I watched the clouds billow by and in each of them I saw my father's face. It was then that I noticed the buzzing of the bees and started to watch them fly about, pollinating the plants. It was the bees that saved me … Whenever I needed to think about life I came and watched the bees.

The volunteers in our community garden had heard what had happened to me and looked out for me, bringing me something to eat or drink and sometimes even asking me to come and help them. Between the bees, the gardeners and the plants I began to no longer feel alone. In short order I stopped peering up at the clouds in the sky.

My mother had to stay home to look after us three, my youngest brother being barely able to walk, the oldest brother in grade two and me in grade six. The following year I entered the middle grades at a new school and I went from being the eldest at the elementary school to the youngest in the pile of hundreds of older students. I was also going through the throws of puberty and well the older boy were onto us *girlings* like flies to sweet honey. We all knew what they wanted; to taste the honey!

After a few months of the *girling* fiasco … I started to get into trouble so the principal of our school would take me out of class and assignment me to community service. I did this to get away from the older boys. What would I end up doing? The '*punishment'* my principal set on me was to work in our community gardens. Somehow he understood what I needed …

It took me just few days to realize that it wasn't much of a punishment for me, for the community gardeners paid me in vegetables for my work and well, my mother knew to send my two younger brothers to school with food for their lunches. If anything was left over she would give it to me. That was fair, don't you think?

Deciding to be a bit of a tom boy I got through my puberty, away from the attention of the older boys, while I enjoyed the fresh air, sun light and was well fed with fresh vegetables. On my breaks out of the afternoon sun I would go under the shade of a tree to do my homework and keep up with the school work. For me it was the best of both worlds. It was a twelve hour 'school day' that fit me finely.

Off in the corner of the garden we had a pond they let me swim in and well, at my age there isn't much going on. So I took to swimming as part of my mid-day break, being sure to be out of the water, dried off and fully dressed by the time the older boys were prodding past the gardens on their way home from school. We had an electric pump and the pond is where we got the water to tend to our plants. There were fish and crustaceans in the pond and a family of fresh water otters.

By the end of my seventh grade I was the tallest student in my class and had the best marks in all my subjects. Oh, and I had my breasts and my hips as well. The sun, fresh air and fresh vegetables had done their thing. I was no longer a mere *girling*.

By the end of my seventh year my principal had figured me out and so he invited me into his office on the first day of my eight grade and said to me that provided I kept all my marks as A's '*I could do as I pleased when I pleased, here at school or in the community gardens.* '

That year, when I was fifteen I was the happiest girl on planet Earth!

That year I grew giant zucchini plants that broke the community garden record. They told me the carrots I grew were the most succulent they had ever tasted, and the onions caramelized like no onions they had ever cooked. That year I learned how best to manage the watering and spacing of the different vegetables I planted.

I was taught this by one of the elderly men who had worked many years as a volunteer in the community garden. He also made me a pair of gloves from sack cloth from scratch. His name was Patrick. He walked slowly with a cane and had just turned one hundred. He told me that every day was an adventure. He had been an astrophysicist and perhaps it is because of him I enjoy astronomy today?

This was the year we were taught '*the birds and the bees*" at school. I took to learning all I could about the lives of the bees, reading all the books I could find and watching countless videos on the internet. Then I took to the field to study them in real life. I was curious where their home was and it took me several weeks to find it. One morning I stumbled upon their hives. There were four small boxes being tended by a bee keeper in a field two kilometers away.

He saw that I was watching from afar so he invited me to come and join him for tea while he took a rest from his work. While we chatted I told him that I had come from the community garden, which he had heard about. He told me that bees don't like to travel far from their hives when they collect pollen and

that they would only travel a great distance if there was no pollen closer to the hive.

Then I asked him a silly question "… is tending a bee hive hard work?" He laughed and then asked me "why I asked him this?" I told him it would be nice if there was a bee hive closer to our garden so that the bees did not have to travel so far to pollinate our plants. He smiled and suggested "perhaps it was time for me to come visit your garden."

The bee keeper did visit the following day, at the hottest part of the afternoon, since he could not work the bees when it was too hot. "It would stress them out," he said. He was most impressed by our garden and asked if we might plant a circle of flowers around the garden to attract the bees? I volunteered to do this and this became my most important contribution to the garden that year, that and the fact at the end of that spring the bee keeper came with two small hives and set them up at the center of our garden "so the bees would not have too far to pollinate our plants. "

The bee keeper taught me that bees like caffeine but stay away from peppermint, spearmint, eucalyptus, and thyme. From that year onwards we gathered these four plants downwind of the hive and in one compact small spot so as not to annoy them. When I wanted certain plants pollinated I put cold coffee into a water pistol and just scented these plants. It worked like a charm. I watched the bees dance with happiness! Between the flowers I had planted at the beginning of the season around the garden, and the pollination

of the vegetable plants, at the end of that growing season we harvested some honey for us, which became an annual harvest treat for the gardeners.

By the end of my eighth grade year I had been adopted by the gardeners as one of their own. Oh … and I was considered an expert on bees! It was my task from that year onwards to assist the bee keeper whenever he came to tend our hives.

In my ninth year, that spring I convinced the gardeners to look at the *sunprints* of the different plants and suggested they plant the tall plants at the back and the small ones at the front so all plants got the maximum sunlight. I also planted sunflowers at the very back of the garden and they grew to a height of four meters. We also set the footprint of the garden into something geometric, so that it wasn't so chaotic.

We also built some bird and bat houses to help deal with the insects. The bird houses were meant to deal with the insects eating our vegetables while the bat houses were there to deal with the mosquitos. In a few months we noticed far fewer pests. We also started an earthworm farm and used this to help the plants and to feed the birds.

By the end of my grade nine I was working on the entire plot of our community garden learning new things from the other gardeners or from books, and from time to time providing advice on issues that the other gardeners found perplexing. As a rule of thumb we did not use man-made herbicides and pesticides but tried to find nature's way to deal with unwanted

pests and plants. I admit that year I did a great deal of weeding and sometimes had to chase after bugs, slugs and beetles to protect our precious crops. But I also learning which carnations that kept the pests away!

The harvest that summer was the best they ever had. For the first time, at my suggestion, they had a harvest feast to share what we had all grown together as a community of gardeners. At the harvest feast I tasted vegetable dishes I did not dream possible using potatoes, onion, carrots, garlic, tomatoes, green peppers … and all the dozens of others vegetables we had grown for ourselves. Nothing tastes better than fresh vegetables!

In grade ten I started to learn about organic chemistry and astronomy at school and found these two subjects were intriguing to me. Sure I was a straight A student at math, and biology, as well as socials and literature, but they weren't as interesting to me as the chemistry of living creatures as well as the fascinating things that astronomy taught me. One thing was that that year for the first time in my life I used not only a calendar to keep track of the seasons, but I also used the stars in the sky to tell me when to plant and when to harvest. This made me feel a kinship with agriculturalists and agronomists of times long past.

While out in the fields working I was careful to wear a straw hat with a large brim, like the women working the rice fields of the Far East. I wore sunglasses to protect my eyes and long sleeved cotton shirts and cotton pantaloons trousers to protect my legs from the UV of the sun. The shirts and trousers I wore were thin enough to let me bronze slowly over the course of a day. On

my face and ears I wore sun screen and my sun glasses were not merely polarized but had a gold film to keep the Infrared light out of my eyes. Ah, and every day you would find a smile on my face.

The garden had a compost, but I thought that could be improved. I learned about the Commanox bacteria Nitrospira by watching a conference on the 50th anniversary of its discovery. Commanox means the complete oxidization of the ammonia molecule into nitrate. Nitrospira was discovered in 2009. This gave me the idea to find a stainless steel collecting trough, set a pebble and sand filter bed and place it under the compose bin so that it sloped into a bucket. Every morning I would pour a cup of my pee on top of the compost (I made sure no one saw me do this). Every few days I would gather the compose tea and spray it at the base of the plants. I smiled to myself as I watched the plants grow appreciably taller that year. Nitrate is nitrate!

By the end of my tenth grade I had increased our vegetable yield by ten percent. That year my family was well nourished for the first time since my father died. I had become a provider for my mother, two brothers and I. I have my school principal and the community gardeners to thank for that.

By the end of my tenth grade. I was smart, tall, healthy, strong and very pretty. I was an accomplished agrarian and my classmates were calling me *L'Amazonian*.

It was in my eleventh year that I decided I wanted to go to university but my family was so poor that I could see no way forward. I had several talks with

my principal and some of my teachers and asked them what I could do and all they did was shrug their shoulders. One even suggested "why go to university when you could learn everything you need to learn online." That was easy for him to say, he had gone to university, taken a Chemistry masters and was now teaching high school. I asked him, "who would hire someone who hadn't gone to university?" He didn't have a good answer to that and so he changed the subject.

In grade eleven my high school counsellor suggested I study psychology. "Why?" I asked him, "psychology has not practical value to me. " He argued that "psychology is useful to understand people." I told him "I am not interested in people! I am interested in plants and planets. If the best you can do with a psychology degree is a school counselor … that's was not for me." When I said this he all but threw me out of his office. I admit that I do enjoy plants better than people,

By the end of my eleventh year I had helped to boost food production at our community gardens by another twenty percent. Once everyone had taken what they needed we had a surplus of food so it was decided in the spring and summer that we would have a farmer's market every Sunday to sell our excess to city people who visited us. That year we made an astonishing $ 7,500 after expenses at our farmer's markets. The organizers of our community gardens put the money in the bank while they figured out what they wanted to do with it. They told me that I was responsible for much of our boost in food production …

That summer I read a fascinating science article that pointed out that there were two types of plants, C3 and C4 plants. The article said that most plants that we harvest and eat are C3 and what is astonishing is *as the percentage of $CO_2$ in the air increases so does the output of the C3 plants!* The C4 were, however, already at their maximum capacity.

One day in my grade eleven biology class my teacher said something that was just wrong and I stood up and ask him to justify what he had just said. His attitude was the world was coming to an end because of climate change. I disagreed and said the road ahead was bright and exciting. He sent me to the principal's office.

This made me wonder why so many believe, like my biology teacher, that the future will be terrible. To me climate change has become their religion the same way that the followers of *Francis of Assisi* gave up meaningful work, and most of their Earthly possessions, and went on pilgrimages from one Italian town to the next, spreading the black plague, and causing a hundred years of darkness … before the Renaissance of Italy sprung up from the optimistic artists and scientists in the next century.

My principal listened quietly to what I had to say and then at the end of the day asked the biology teacher to come down and have a conference with the two of us. I told him about the C3 plants as well as the thirty percent increase we had in the output of our community garden over the past two years because of improved practices. The principal then said something to the biology teacher I will never forget …"*it is the role of the state to educate. It is not the*

*role of the state to indoctrinate*." The following morning I was back in my biology class and under the watchful eye of our principal the teacher apologized in front of his class for saying something that was neither valid nor scientific. The world is not coming to an end!

In my twelfth year I decided to make a science fair project out of this C3/C4 article which also looked at other ways of increasing food production. The article said that the actual efficiency of light harvest in photosynthesis was a measly few percent. I experimented with laying beneath some plants a reflective surface that doubled the amount of sun light through some plants that were not in direct sunlight. I would open the reflectors in the morning and evening and closed them at mid-day to prevent the plants from drying out. In the space of a few weeks I saw added growth.

On some plants I used transparent, semipermeable bags impregnated with activated carbon that trapped carbon dioxide for several hours each day. I would put the bags on the plants late in the afternoon and leave them on overnight. In the morning they would have absorbed several milligrams of $CO_2$. Then by mid-day the sun heated the bags enough to release half of the trapped $CO_2$ for the plant to benefit from. In the afternoons I took the bags off the plants. I got proficient at the technique and watched a noticeable increase in the food production on the vegetables I studied.

That year I won a gold medal at the Science Fair as well as three prizes, one for chemistry, one for statistics and one for horticulture. What made my project unique wasn't that I was the first person to use my techniques, it was

because I was the first person to show how to optimize this technique using organic chemistry and statistics.

In my twelfth year I also suggested part of our garden would go vertical to grow more tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. In a corner plot that seemed not so forgiving to vegetables because of the direct sun at my suggestion we also planted mint. For the first time, and at my suggestion, we also decided to rotate some of the crops and plant some heritage seeds.

Most community gardens were run for fun or as a past time. By my twelfth years and at my suggestion, our community garden had taken up the task to provide food for the elderly or the needy. What the volunteers gardeners did not need to take for their own tables, they offered to others on fixed income or in an impoverished state. What surplus that remained was what was offered at our Farmer's Market.

That was a particularly exciting year for me, for I had difficult classes that required I spend more time during the day in school like math, calculus, chemistry, biology and physics. Though I found the subject difficult I took physics because it was a pre-requisite to learning astronomy and I wanted to do this if I ever got to university.

And so in grade twelve I took to getting up very early to be at the community garden just before the sun rose so that I could get some gardening done before school, then, provided no one was lurking about, I would take a quick dip in a secluded corner of our pond before rushing off to school. It was funny

actually since if I did not have a swim I smelt like the richness of the soil when I got to school, while if I took a dip I smelled like the richness of the pond water.

Sometimes my classmates didn't want to sit next to me because of the scent. I guess I could have taken a shower at the gym in school but that thought hadn't crossed my mind. By the way, all through middle and high school I did not take a Physical Education class, and I didn't even know where the change rooms were let alone the girl's shower. The only time I went into our school gym was on graduation day when the principal handed out our graduation certificates. That day I took a proper shower … at the school after spending the morning in the community garden.

One morning, in my twelfth year and without me knowing a renowned photographer using a telephoto lens caught me just as I was getting out of the pond after a swim. I guess the word that there was *une Amazonian* in the area had caught his ear. The photographer took a picture of me from behind without my consent. He saw it published in National Geographic, but I would not find out about this until the end of that year. If I had known he had done this, I would have been mortified and not gone skinny dipping in our pond ever again. There is a happy ending to this little drama and you will have to wait to hear what it is.

In my twelfth grade, with the rotation of crops and the vertical gardens I had suggested we boosted our food productivity by another twenty percent. That

year we fed several hundred elderly and needy people and our farmer's markets still brought in $ 20,000.

We also had a prestigious local restaurant ordering speciality herbs and vegetables from us, including whole fennel and giant leeks. I sometimes would be the one to deliver the order to the restaurant. The head chef said to me that he had never tasted such remarkable fennel and such sublime leeks before. He had no complaints about the other vegetables except he could not get enough of them. One day when I did not have to rush back, he let me watch him in his kitchen as he prepared lunch for his patrons. Is was a five star restaurant, needing reservations and had a waiting list that was several months long with avid patrons from around the world. I was intrigued watching him and his many sous-chefs at work.

That day I had *Vichyssoise* for the first time, made especially for me by the head chef with potatoes, shallots, onions and leeks from out garden. If you have never had *Vichyssoise,* but have had traditional French Onion soup, you are in for a real treat!

He also made me *Ratatouille* from scratch and just for me in a small ceramic dish which he placed in the oven the finish. As I watched him prepare the dish I was amazed how simple vegetables could be turned into such a succulent dish. *Ratatouille* is made with eggplant, tomatoes, green peppers, onions and garlic and some other vegetables from our garden. I had never heard about or eaten *Ratatouille* before and so asked him about the history of the dish and where he got the recipe. He said the dish was taught him in France when he

did his cordon bleu schooling in Paris. I chuckled when he said that the recipe he used came from a French Cook Book written by Julia Childs.

As I left that day, the head chef invited me to visit the restaurant whenever I wanted a free meal or wanted to learn how to cook. I took him up on his offer and once every second week I would spend a few hours in his kitchen. He took up his pledge and by the end of my twelfth year I was one of his 'on call' sous-chefs. He had also fatten me up a bit … with the creams and butters. Ever have *Champignon au beurre*?

By April that year if one of his sous-chefs was not available he would put out the call for me. One afternoon even my principal came calling in a biology class at school to tell me "I was needed … as a sous-chef." My classmates were amused!

At the end of my twelfth year, just before my graduation, the head chef explained to me that being a restaurateur was like being an artist. You take the raw materials and through the skill and expertise of your artistry to convert them into such succulent food that the patrons were loath to eat merely because they are works of art. Even his potage was world class! His secret mantra was … *better living through kitchen chemistry* … I think he was trying to recruit me to become a chef.

I asked him that day what food he made drew him the most income. Without a hesitation he said desserts and pastries. Then I asked him about the foods he made with vegetables. He had to sit and think about my question for a few

minutes. He didn't answer my question through word, though. He just got up, took some ingredients and went to work. The lunch he made me that day was without comparison!

By the day my graduation from high-school had arrived I had learned directly how important vegetable gardening was in our lives. That day I just wanted the formalities to run as quick as they could so that I could return to the place I treasured most in my life – the community garden.

But something far more pleasant awaited me as I stood there before the thousands of people gathered, standing beside my principal, who was as proud of me as if he was my own father. I saw the smile of my mother and two brothers and many of my gardening companions. I even saw the chef there too taking a precious day off work. Patrick was missing because he had passed away in his sleep just a few days ago. But I knew he was there in spirit …

Then there was a pause … as I stood there awkward in the simple yellow dress my mother had sewn for me and aged grey-brown open toed gardening sandals.

The principal spoke warmly as he said the following … "there is very good news for you today … we are all proud of you and I have several gifts to present to you" as he handed me each of the letters you told the audience what they were.

… one was a letter from his university alma mater who had accepted me on his recommendation with full scholarships of $ 7,000 in a combined biology and astronomy undergraduate program.

… the second was from the community garden who had decided to give me a scholarship of $ 27,500 and an offer for another $ 5,000 a year for four years if I needed it while I am at university. They also invited me to return to run the community garden after I graduated from university.

… the third was a certificate that I was now an expert bee keeper.

… the fourth was from the renown photographer who had heard of my plight and had given me the remuneration he had received for the picture he had taken of me, rising out of the water and into the morning sun … another $ 12,500. There was a copy of the picture in the envelope. I started to blush. It was a beautiful picture!

… the fifth was a scholarship from the restaurant for $ 15,000 and the offer for a job that waits for me after I graduated, first as a sous-chef, and then, if I later make the grade, as a chef.

I stood there in astonishment. I had not sent in any university applications that year because I thought my family could not afford university. I was going to university after all and much of the costs of me going there had been taken on by my colleagues and friends. Without question, the best thing I ever did was to learn how to garden!

Have you ever seen an Amazonian cry?

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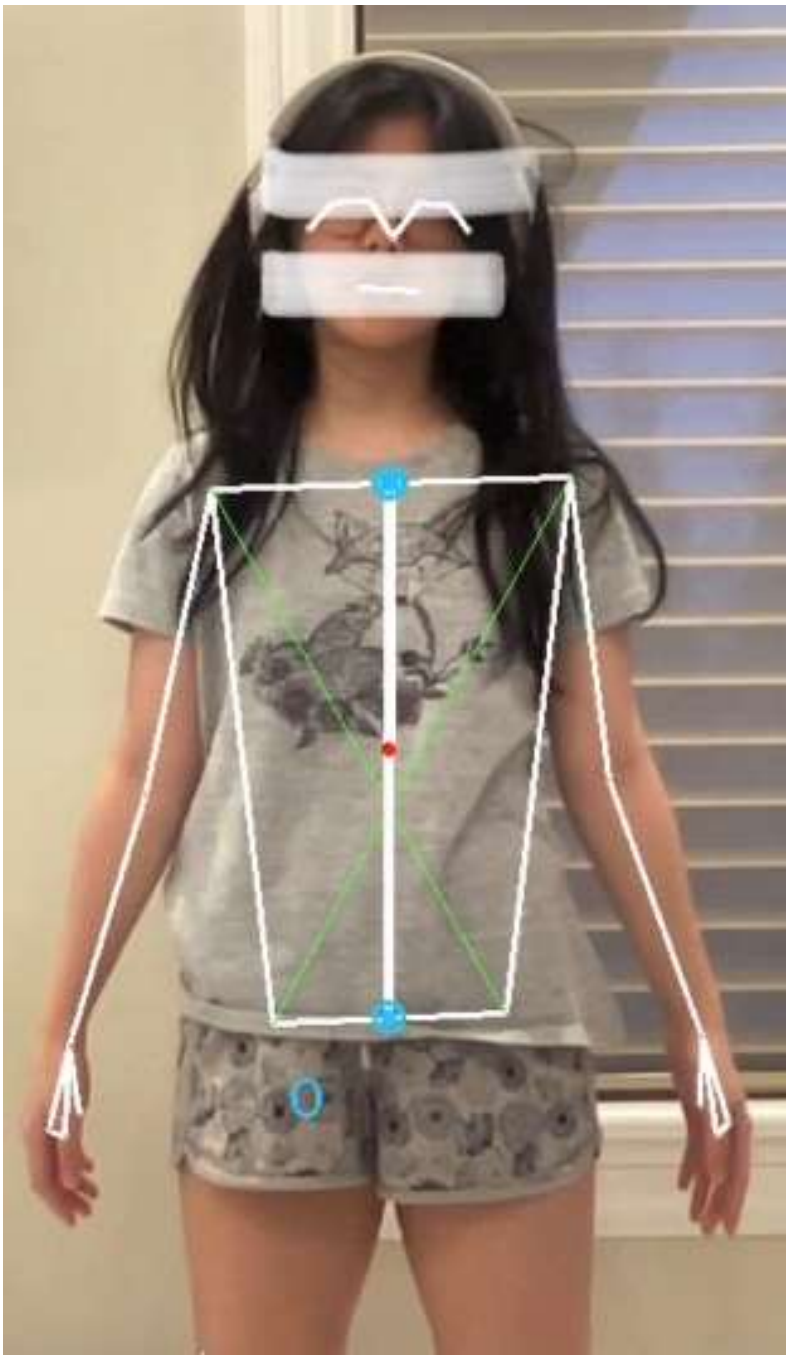

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